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WINDOWS ON THE INDIAN FOREST ; DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF THE WEST AND THE EAST.

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Abstract:
Sprawling Forests of India often stand to many as an epitome of ethereal beauty and to others a temple of peace and wisdom. From time immemorial, people from both the East and the West venture into Indian forests as merchants, hunters, explorers and, fortune-seekers . Numerous narratives ,reflecting upon various attributes and perceptions of Indian forest ,are being written .To assess the actual significance of forest in Indian life and culture and to chalk out a sensible and conducive forest policy,essential for the survival of the environment today, one should gather an idea about such writings. And this article endeavors to do so.

Introduction:
Narratives of Indian forests, particularly in the late 19^{th} n the20th century, are far from being scanty. As it is not feasible to browse through all such accounts because of confined space of this article, one has no other option but to focus one`s attention on a few of them.
The principal area of discussion of this article is mostly the forest land belonging to the east and northern parts of India between 1850 to 1950.And for this, narratives(both fictions and non-fictions) penned by authors from both the East and the West, have been taken into contemplation.

The famous fiction ‘The Jungle Book,’ written by Rudyard Kipling. highlights the relationship between a human child and wild animals of an Indian jungle. Kipling’s story unfolds how Bagheera, a black panther, rescues a little human child Mowgli, lost in the jungle. Bagheera entrusts the job of raising the human child

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to Raksha, wife of Akeela , the leader of a pack of wolves. Raksha raises up Mowgli as her own child and showers him with unconditional love. However,not all the animals are ready to accept Mowgli, as their own. For example, Sher Khan, the dreaded tiger always looks for a chance to kill Mowgli .Still, there are animals like Baloo , the bear, Bagheera ,the panther, who adore Mowgli and acknowledge the superiority of Mowgli, to other beasts for his being a human. They also point it out to Mowgli ,that ‘’ The others they hate thee because their eyes cannot meet thine-because thou hast pulled out thorns from their feet ,because thou art a man’’(The Jungle Book ,Rudyard Kipling: Macmillan ,1894:pp14).{1}

Though, Mowgli kills Sher khan , the terror for both the villagers and animals, yet fails to satisfy some animals, including his wolve -brothers, who demand that Mowgli , should go back to his village. On the other hand, some beasts implore Mowgli to stay back and be their leader. Mowgli refuses and states ‘’the jungle is shut to me and I must forget your talk and your companionship, but I will be more merciful than ye are. I promise that when I am a man among men, I will not betray ye to men as ye have betrayed me’’ (The Jungle Book, Rudward Kipling Macmillan 1894: p3){.2}

One should note, that Kipling’s fiction tries to underline the fact that a real bond of friendship on the basis of equality can never be established between a human and other animals. .Some critics point out that Mowgli, though an outsider in the world of jungle ,yet by virtue of his status as a human being, is endowed with an authority over the natives beyond his right. Mowgli`s inequitable place in the jungle hierarchy casts him as a symbol of imperialism and colonialism which is inscribed in the textuality.

Kipling analyzes the relations between Mowgli and animals from a linear perception of human values, and follies, but fails to acknowledge the omnipotent truth that at the end both are dependent on each other for sheer survival. And both are integral components of the same ecological whole. Perhaps, during Kipling’s times the notion that the environment plays a quite crucial role in the life of every living being on the earth ,did not gain much ground as it has achieved today.

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‘The End of Nana Sahib; The Steam House’, is a novel by Jules Verne , who uses forests of east and north India as the fiction`s backdrop. The principal theme of the book is the journey of a group of British colonists in a wheeled house pulled by a steam- powered mechanical elephant. Their aim was to know the whereabouts of Nana Sahib, an important leader of the great Indian Mutiny of 1857, who fled to an undisclosed destination after the debacle of 1857.Though the colonists travel through many forest areas and sometimes one or two of them try to shoot a tiger, yet forest is never their prime area of interest, .Rather, the novel is more concerned in depicting the happenings that took place after the flight of Nana and consequent reactions of the British government.

Fictions apart, there are magnificent accounts on Indian forests and its game, written by hard-core hunters like Jim Corbett, William Rice, Samuel White Baker, Henry Shakespeare, and Kenneth Anderson .

Jim Corbett, a hunter, , author, and conservationist grew up in the forest land around Nainital.. His numerous books like Jungle Lore, Man eaters of Kumayun, The Temple Tiger and more Man-eaters of Kumaun , The Man –Eating leopard of Rudraprayag etc. emphasize more on his various hunting exploits, shooting skill, physical and mental agility, presence of mind under the most trying situation and less on his appreciation of the relevance and importance of forests in the lives of local inhabitants .

To be a good hunter, Corbett, right from his childhood days, trained himself under the guidance of his big brother Tom. First he started with small games,and then graduated to killing big animals.He himself stated ,”It is not possible for me to describe my feelings as I stood looking down at my first leopard………Trembling with joy at the beautiful animal I had shot, and trembling most of all with anticipation of the pleasure I would have in carrying the news of my great success to those at home who I knew would be as pleased and as proud of my achievement as I was. I could have screamed, shouted, danced and sung all at one and at the same time.’’(The Jungle Lore, Jim Corbett, Oxford University Press,1969:p 84) {4}.

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However, passion for hunting was never the sole prerogative of Corbett. William Rice, another British hunter, proudly states in the preface of his book ,’Tiger Shooting in India’ that in the year of 1850 during a shooting stint in Rajputana their bag consisted of 156 heads of large game. Of them 68 tigers were killed and 30 wounded. Similarly ,King George VII slayed 39 tigers and 18 rhinos in Nepalese Terai region in a single year of 1911. Photographs of George Curzon and his wife participating in tiger hunting in 1903 ,testify the growing popularity of this particular sport among the British royals and bureaucrats in the late 19th century India. Perhaps, a mentality of colonial masculinity and superiority got expressed through such exploits. And Corbett was no exception to this psyche.

Discourses of western hunters have certain similarities. The word` forest’ conveys a different connotation to them. They do recognize that forest is a special providence of Nature but nothing beyond that. A minute study finds an inherent dichotomy in the narratives of western hunters. They commit the greatest ecological crime on one hand and on the other, pine for conservation of wild beasts. Jim Corbett talked about maintaining ecological balance but in reality worked against it. It was only after depleting the tiger population of the Himalayan forests to a very sorry state, that he realized his folly and worked for the setting up of the`Corbett National Park’

Surprisingly, the British Raj evinced the same predatory sentiment of the hunters so far as Indian forests were concerned. Its forest policy was an extension of the policy of ‘loot ‘ which it pursued in the sphere of Indian economy and politics. However, before delving deep into examining such policy, one should gather prior knowledge of hunting culture in ancient and medieval India.

Hunting of wild game was quite

a popular sport for all social segments in both ancient and medieval India. Both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are replete with accounts of game hunting. Surprisingly, at the same time, forest occupies a very sacred place in Oriental psyche. All ancient Indian scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads, Smriti Shastras acknowledge the aesthetic, social, religious and cultural significance of forests in human life. The Atharva Veda hymn 12.1.11 reads` O Earth; Pleasant be thy hills,

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snow-clad mountains and forests; O numerous coloured ,firm and protected Earth; On this earth I stand undefeated, unslain,unhurt’’(D.Chand,1997,The Atharvaveda(translated) South Asia Book, Columbia,U,S.A. pp949 in BM kumar, Forestry in ancient India: some literary evidences on Productive and Protective Aspects, Asian Agri-History,vol 12.No.4,2008,p299-306){5}.

During the vedic age no village would be complete without woodlands in and around it .And each village was responsible through its panchayat for maintaining the forest in its own territory. So the concept of participatory management of forest, a vital component of the forest management paradigm today as propagated by the West, was very much in vogue in ancient India. ‘’Every village must have a cluster of five great trees`Panchavati’,symbolizing the five primary elements—earth,water,fire,air an` ether’--the totality of everything’’(BM.Kumar,Forestry in Ancient India p;302){6}

Even Arthasastra by Kautilya, a post-vedic Indian treatise on various dimensions of statecraft, also provides guidelines for preservation of environment, forest and wildlife. He reiterates that the ruler must develop `Abhayaranya’ where trees and animals would thrive ,free from the fear of slaughter. “The practice of segregating forest into various zones like `Shrivan’ or the forest of prosperity,`Tapoban’, the forest of religion’ the home of sages, `Mahavan or great natural forest, equivalent to protected forest underscores a conscious appreciation of the existence and importance of forest in human civilization”.{7}

Coming to the Mughal period, royal hunt, a popular, pleasure sport was never given up by the Rulers. The lust for power, prestige and political conquest was at the heart of every Mughal hunt. According to Abul Fazal, emperor Akbar was very passionate about hunting and killed numerous cheetas, tigers, antelopes etc. in his time. He engaged every member of the local population into the royal beat. This enabled him, opined Abul Fazal, to regulate and keep a watch on their daily affairs. At the same time the hapless, poor subjects felt much relieved and reassured about their property, crops and lives protected by the mighty emperor. During the rule of Jehangir, he witnessed the slaughter of 23,532 animals of which

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17,000 was killed by him. Even Nurjahan , wife of Jehangir, shot to death two tigers during a hunt as mentioned by contemporary narratives.

The British followed the same trajectory in regard to hunting in the Indian subcontinent. The British cloaked hunting in the guise of imperial benevolence and sought justification in hunting animals that destroyed crops, cattle and lives of poor subjects. In reality, for the British, Indian forest spelt money. Clearing of forests made land available to grow vast plantations of tea, coffee and opium that were loaded into vessels made of Indian sal and teak trees, which were hacked to carry shipments of native fabric ,opium and spices all over the world, thus filling the Crown`s coffer. A systematic exploitation of the Indian forest of its precious wealth reached its zenith in the late 19th and 20th century..

Writer A.S.Pandian in his article(Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India,March2001,p84 ,Journal of Historical Sociology vol -14,No1.March2001) {7} states,” The tiger often figured in colonial hunting narratives as an oppressive figure terrorizing the rural populace with the specter of arbitrary violence.’’ Tigers were seen as a tremendous threat to the colonial agrarian base. Therefore, its elimination was often encouraged by the government. Hefty prize money declared by the government further enthused hunters, rank soldiers, military officials, native kings to ravage Indian forests in search of the coveted game. On the other hand, the government also earned handsome revenue by granting licenses for shooting.

In the ambience of colonial masculinity of the late Raj, sportsman-like hunting provided means of cultivating disciplined soldiers and officers, essential for protecting the empire. Capt. Henry Shakespeare, a noted hunter in the colonial period, recommended hunting as an innocent, manly and useful way of preventing young soldiers from falling prey to ‘ frivolous pursuits or effeminate pleasures such as ‘feasting, rioting or debauchery{9} and training them to better deal with crises such as the Mutiny . So hunting was no longer a pleasure-sport but a necessity, even if that meant resorting to the regretful tactic of shooting a sleeping tiger as legendary hunter as Corbett was once reported of doing.

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Jim Corbett in spite of his deep empathy for Indians plagued by poverty, casteism, superstitions as etched in his great book My India, was primarily a hunter and a protagonist of colonial despotism. Some also look upon him as an appendage of colonial administration and instrumental in opening the Himalayan

Terai region to imperial aspirations. Usually, after slaying a tiger, Corbett gave the affected villagers an opportunity to know that the reign of terror was over. And the hunter, an icon of Imperial might and invincibility, successfully opened the countryside to the rule of law and the improvement of welfare ,and also served the purpose of winning the hearts of its inhabitants .Moreover, such exploits seemed to bring to the forefront the utter incapacity of villagers, reduced to the state of feminized spectators in the face of a tiger’s terror, resolved only by the superior intervention of the white hunter.

Jim.Corbett , as the owner of ‘Haldiwani’ village worked least for upgrading the condition of village folks whose access to the forest was severely circumscribed by the colonial government. His various books never refer to any labour of Corbett, teaching villagers alternative means to improve their lot, or the ways to sustain the forest wealth for the benefit of all.

Kenneth Anderson was another European hunter who hunted for many years in forests of south India .While exploiting the expertise of the local forest people in matter of tiger-hunting, he did not forget in alluding to superstitions ,illiteracy and ill-health of such people in his books. Hunter Henry Shakespeare, wrote about the crude weapons and the Asiatic laziness of local Indian hunters. He complained that they lacked the muscular power of the Europeans and concluded that the British hunters were far more powerful than the natives., complacently overlooking the fact that after the Mutiny of 1857, Indians were robbed of their rights of carrying arms.

It is often alleged that Indian forest people did more damage to their own forests than the Europeans, But a rational outlook underlines the opposite that is ,Indian villagers and forest- people, robbed of their right to use firearms ,could attain little success in hunting wild denizens of forests with outdated weapons like sticks, javelins ,bows and arrows. And small game that they hunted were for mere

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survival than a pleasure-sport undertaken by both European and Indian royals, officials and hunters. In this context , one should take into consideration that the Mughals never evicted their subjects from the bosom of forests in the manner such as the British did in colonial India. It was the British who for the first time entwined the fate of Indian forests with that of the global economy,a process which robbed India of its precious forest wealth to the full. Even series of revolts by forest tribes all over the country could not compel the British from discarding such anti-people forest policies.

Books, penned by Indian authors, on Indian forests in the late 19th century impart altogether a different message.To them forest is the prime source of life and civilization and also a sacred abode of gods.To stand by this observation ,one should first refer to a few articles written by the noted author, humanist , and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore. In his article ‘Tapovan’, Tagore elucidates how the forest is the foundation stone of the Indian civilization and how the ancient Indian thinkers were surrounded by and linked to the life of the forest. The intimate relationship between human life and living Nature becomes a source of knowledge. Life in the forest made it clear that living nature was the important source of light and air , of food and water. Later Tagore started Santiniketan as a Topovan—a forest school—both to take inspiration from Nature and to create an Indian Renaissance . Tagore wrote in the essay ‘The Religion of Forest’ that forests are sources of water and the storehouse of a biodiversity that can teach us the lessons of democracy; of leaving space for others ,while drawing sustenance from the common web of life. In his essay Tapovan , Tagore opines India's best ideas have come where man was in communion with trees and rivers and lakes, away from the crowds. (Tagore,Tapovana,quoted by Vandana Shiva in Staying Alive 1989,p55-56){9} .The culture that has arisen from the forest has been influenced by the diverse processes of renewal of life which are always at play in the forest. Tagore looks upon forest

as a perennial teacher which imparts a message of peace and freedom to all.

Forest plays a supreme role in the famous novel ‘Aranyak’by Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay . While Tagore upholds the importance of forest from an

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abstract, aesthetic and spiritual point of view, Bibhutibhusan ,apart from elaborating the ethereal beauty of the forest, alludes to various happenings within the forest of social and political significance. The author was primarily a city dweller and had no love for forest as such. But the compulsion for earning a livelihood ultimately made him accept the job of an estate manager of a huge zamindari estate in the forests of Purnea and Bhagalpore.

In the beginning, he was so tormented by the absolute silence of the forest that he yearned for city life. But slowly a change came over him. Slowly but imperceptibly the forest cast a magic spell on him and he came to be mesmerized by the beauty and grandeur of the former. The author himself commented “This psychological transition of mine was not an overnight affair. Nature had to work hard to make it happen. She presented herself before me as evenings that descended adorning crowns of blood red clouds, the scorching heat of the afternoon……..or may be the night that swept in enigmatically dressed in gossamer gown bejeweled with stars and wearing a perfume of the fragrance of the woods .Nature mesmerized me, seduced me and singed my soul. I was finally and hopelessly in love with her.”(Aranyak.Bandyopadhyay,1939 ,translated by Suchismita Banerjee Rai 2017, pub.Mitra and Ghosh.p33).{11}

The author was a true worshiper of Nature. Though he knew rifle shooting yet he had no lust for slaying animals. Forest was an epitome of emotional and spiritual solace for him. Critics might say that this is typically a middle- class Bengali sentiment which always romanticizes everything including death, but never has any weakness for any challenge that involves physical competence and security.

In his deep love for the forest, he was joined by Jugalprasad of Lobtulia.He was a man of abject poverty, but that could not diminish his obsessive love for the forest .When the author first came across Jugalprasad, the latter was sowing some seeds into the ground. On being asked about his activity, he replied that he was sowing some seeds of a rare creeper with red flowers,’If I plant them, by two years they will bloom, making the forest look more beautiful.”(Aranyak ,Bandyopadhyay,1939,translated by S.Banerjee Rai-page 156).{12} .The author was deeply moved.” I was filled with reverence for the man in front of me.Even though

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he had nothing to gain out of it, yet just for the beautification of this natural reserve ,he had been devoting his time and money. This man was unique indeed’’(Aranyak,Bandyopadhyay,1939,translated by S.Banerjee.Rai p 156){13}

When asked by the author that why Jugalprasad was wasting time and money for the beautification of this wild forest, the latter answered “My primary target in life is to make flowerless areas bloom with magnificent colours”.(Aranyak-Bndyopadhyay,translated by Banerjee Rai page-157){14}. The author resolved to join Jugalprasad in his noble cause. Together they worked relentlessly to make the forest more beautiful than it was. This was something unbelievable. A pauper like Jugalprasad did not demand anything from the author like a piece of rent-free land like others, not even money for his bare sustenance. .Though he was never sure of his two square meals, yet he never thought twice about purchasing costly plants to adorn the forest. He was indeed a true admirer of Nature and custodian of her beauty. And if men like Jugalprasad were many in number, Indian forests would have thrived like never before.

Though the author was appointed by a private zamindar to rent out a large part of the forest area within a short time, yet the author was at war with himself to go through this unpleasant task. Numerous pages contain his agony over his unpardonable act of destroying the sprawling forest.

Gradually, it dawned upon the author that the forest was not merely a conglomeration of trees, flowers and wild beasts. It is also the mirror of the human society lying outside. Human greed, anger despair, and poverty always vitiates the serene, peaceful ambience of the forest .Everybody endeavors to exploit the forest to his own interest and nobody cares for its sustenance.

As an estate manager, the author was compelled to rent out virgin forest areas among prospective clients. The sight of burning huge areas of forest for the sake of cultivation broke his heart.”The crackling of the woods in the fire could be heard from afar. It pained me so much that I felt as if my own bones were crackling.So much greenery perished. So many beautiful plants burnt

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away…….But those who burnt the forest were driven by the lust for money”(Aranyak,Bandyopadhyay,1939,translated by S.Banerjee Rai, p 172){15}.

Persons like Chottu Singh took over thousand acres of land and Rasbehari Singh , the moneylender

, looked upon the forest as a goldmine and resolved to reap huge profit from it.

There was also a large no. of people living in the forest, who never possessed anything in life but abysmal poverty .Thus, the forest which was equally generous to all with its bounty, became a cynosure of inequality and discord.

When the time for harvesting crops came, the rich Rajput landowners like Chotu Singh and Rasbehari Singh ganged up against the crowd of poor cultivators who could not afford to lose a morsel of grain. As a result, frequent clashes, bloodshed became the order of the day. Caste divisions further polluted the serene tenor of the forest .The low-caste people like Dusads or Gangotas were always looked upon with scorn ,and were never allowed to sit and dine with the high-caste people. The author severely protested against this inhuman practice but of no avail. He failed to alter the mindset of people around him.

The case of Kunta is another example of unjust diktat of the human society.

Kunta, a widow, was so poor and without resources that she used to take away the leftover rice of the author’s meal, braving terrible chill or rains, to feed her children. Kunta survived on seeds of grass and fruits available in the forest but never begged out of self respect. The author’s heart bled for Kunta, when he witnessed how the forest guards dragged Kunta by her hair for her act of stealing just half a basket of berries from this huge forest to feed her children. This incident pained him so much that he complained to the local collector Banowari ‘ Why are the people of your land so heartless’,Banowari’?(Aranyak,Bandyopadhyay, translated by S.Banerjee Rai,p75).{1

Author ‘s heart also bled for the poor original inhabitants of the jungle. These people had loved the forest and had taken care of it for so long .The author felt

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that he had some responsibility for such helpless people. And he allotted ten acres of land to Kunta. Over whelmed with gratitude Kunta could only say ‘’Sir is as kind as the good Lord above’’(AranyakBandyopadhyay,translated by S.Banerjee Rai,page 318)16 .The author himself reflected ‘’It was one of the good deeds I had done for someone in my life.’’(Aranyak,Bandyopadhyay,translated by S Banerjee Rai p. 347){17}.

This deep love and concern for humanity urged him to open a school for Matuknath so that he could teach the illiterate children of poor cultivators living in the forest. For months, Matuknath taught Sanskrit to a small group of children.The author gladly commented ‘’A little portion of my beloved forest had turned into a Gurukul just like the ones where the hermits used to teach the children hundreds of years back’’.(Aranyak,Bandyopadhyay,translated by S.Banerjee Rai,p 170-171){18} . And prior to his departure ,the author was delighted to see that the school was running well.

- ‘Palamou’ ,a compilation of essays, first published in1883, was written by Sanjibchandra Chattopadhyay. It describes the sprawling forest of Palamou ,an area belonging to Bihar .Adorned with deep ,impregnable forest of Sal trees ,pitted against the sky like black clouds, nameless creepers and bright flowers ,glowing sunrise and lonely silent evenings, Palamou was a place of idyllic beauty. And the author was simply mesmerized by the grandeur of Palaumo. The author though knew shooting and had a rifle at his disposal yet he never showed interest in slaughtering wild beasts of Palamou .Rather, he was more interested in people ,mostly kols, living in the forest. The simple communal life of the Kol tribe fascinated the author. The kols in spite of abysmal poverty had an indomitable spirit to enjoy life .and never lagged behind to take part in various festivals.

The simpleminded kols were often exploited by moneylenders who came from cities. For various reasons the kols were compelled to take loans from these moneylenders And when they failed to clear their debt, the kols were compelled

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to sign the slave- bond and thus, reduced to the state of slavery. The author rightly comments that prior to the arrival of the moneylenders the lives of the Kols were simpler and free of hunger. And the system of taking loan is an urban creation whjch spells doom for primeval communities living in various pockets of India.

’Aronnyer Odhikar’ written by Mahasweta Devi is essentially a historical novel about the revolt of the Munda tribe led by Birsa Munda against the British rule. The Mundas are ancient tribal people who originally inhabited vast forest land ,spanning over Chotonagpur,Singbhum and Bihar. .Forest is the focal point of their existence. It is more than a mother and provides them with food , fodder, medicine and even security. It is their playground as well as their hunting ground. Moreover ,they sincerely believe that forest is the sacred abode of their venerated gods Bonga and Bongi who protect them from all evils.

But this peaceful, serene communal life of the Mundas was torn to shreds by the British government which tightened its grip over the forest aided by outside elements like Dikus(moneylenders),land sharks, police and Christian missionaries. The British government prohibited the Mundas from entering into the forest ,the moneylenders robbed them of their land and treated them as slaves and the Christian missionaries by converting them to Christianity alienated them from their own culture ,language and religion. Thus, the Mundas ,driven against the wall, had no other option but to revolt against the British under the leadership of Birsa Munda. This upsurge was destined to fail as the Mundas with their archaic weapons and limited resources were no match for the British Raj.

The primary focus of the author does not dwell upon the forest itself but on the exploitation of the Mundas and snapping of their emotional, spiritual and physical ties to the forest by those who were intent upon fleecing the forest for commercial interests. Like Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, writer Mahashweta Devi is less willing to allow herself to be engrossed by the process of discovering the aesthetic identity of the forest itself. That every forest has its own beauty, own language and character, appreciated by a few , is not the primary theme of ‘’Aranyer Odhikar’’. Rather, the book, based on true facts,highlights how the Raj

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committed a colossal injustice by uprooting the naïve, poor, and helpless Mundas, the original inhabitants ,from the bosom of their motherland, the forest.

There is no denial that the revolt of the Mundas was more a socio-political and economic movement than an ecological one. Mundas were denied their fundamental rights over forest and that too by an alien power. From being the kings of the forest they were reduced to the status of slaves. An ignominy too hard to inhale.

The novel ‘Sundrboner Arjan Sardar,’,. by Shri Shibsankar Mitra is a graphic account of the hunting experiences of Arjan Sardar, a poor Bengali hunter who almost single handedly slaughtered a no of tigers in the impregnable forest of Sunderban. Arjan is a true example of a typical Bengali peasant who fights hard to survive on the paltry income from land , fails and eventually gets evicted from his holding. For him, the jungle is an alternative source of sustenance. Circumstances coerced Arjan to turn himself into a poacher. Fruits, wood, honey and meat of deer from the forest helped Arjaan and his village folks to keep their families alive .Moreover ,with an unlicensed gun our protagonist Arjan, graduated from a deer hunter to a tiger-hunter. But it was not a pleasure-sport for Arjan but a question of survival .For, a man –eating tiger is always a threat for survival of hungry people like him .Thus, forest comes to be enmeshed with their destiny and vocation.

After the Independence of India, it was hoped that fate of countless ‘Arjan Sardars’ and that of the Indian forest would change for the better. But it is quite frustrating to find that Forest policies of post-independent India are pathetic emulations of those of the West. The compulsions of the Industrial Revolution induced the West not to look upon forest as an extraordinary providence of Nature for the sustenance of the mankind. Infinite greed of few individuals and corporate interests enthuse the West to treat this natural bounty as a commercial commodity to be exploited to the full. For the lust of timbers,.minerals,and oil, the developed countries till now do not shrink from depleting the forest covers of south-east Asian and Latin American countries .

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India , while developing her ecological policies, tends to overlook her long standing environmental tradition, as ingrained in its culture and religion, of treating Nature as mother of all .A poor imitation of the West in matter of forest policies would not provide India with rich dividends. As the noted environmentalist Vandana Shiva rightly says that we have to decolonize our mind and act independently. Policymakers should bear in mind that India is a country of immense geographical ,cultural and religious diversities. And all region-specific bio-diversities or region- specific requirements of people dependent on forest should be honored. Already exploding population growth and consequent agricultural expansion, technological progression, and impact of globalization have inflicted much harm on our remaining forest cover.

Conclusion:

.Both the East and the West have to bury their differing perspectives so far as the survival of forest is concerned. Humans armed with digital and nuclear expertise, refuse to adhere to the truth that humans, forests ,rivers and mountains all comprise the ecological whole. And man is a very tiny, insignificant component of this ecological loop .But the severest abuse of the environment of the entire planet is being carried on by man alone. And for this great ecological crime,Nature has already started exacting retribution. Melting of Arctic snow, Progressing deserts, frequent tsunamis and fierce forest fires-all are chilling signals of the impending doom. And needless to say that if both the East and the West is still not aware of this , the fury of Nature would engulf all in its unforgiving flames.

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{ 2} Ibid; p 3.

{3} Jim Corbett, Jungle Lore ,Oxford University Press,1953, p26

{4} Ibid; p84

{5} D.Chand,,The Atharvaveda (translated) South Asia Book, Columbia,Missouri, U.S.A.1997, p 949.

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{6}B M.Kumar, Forestry in Ancient India: some literary evidences on Productive and Protective Aspects, Asian Agrarian History,vol 12,No.4,2008,p 299-306.

{7}Ibid. p302.

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{12} Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, Aranyak, Mitra and Ghosh,Kolkata, 1939,translated by Suchismita Banerjee Rai 2017,p33.

{13}Ibid p156.

{14}Ibid p 157

{15}Ibid p 172

{16}Ibid p75

{17}Ibid p347.{18}ibid,p170-171

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ll) Palamou ,Sanjibchandra Chattopadhyay, 1880.

lll) Aronyer Odhikar,Mahasweta Devi, Karuna Prakashani ,1977.

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